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Language Arts- 2

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A Career as an Athletic Trainer

Imagine it's game day. Your heart is pounding, the crowd is cheering, and a 260 pound linebacker is heading your way. You two make contact, and immediately, you both hear and feel a pop in your right knee. Ut oh. It's "game over" for you. Your body instantly flops to the ground and you instinctively start calling out for help. But unlike when you were a child, you're not calling for mom . . . Instead, you're calling for me, your athletic trainer. I have always enjoyed being in an athletic setting, helping others with one-to-one contact and offering a personal touch. I've never had the desire to face linebackers twice the size of me, though. So that's why I want a career that would allow me to work in the setting I love while still keeping all my limbs intact.

I'm interested in a career as a Certified Athletic Trainer because of its interesting career overview, rewarding salary, and hands-on real-life training.

The overview of a career as a Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) includes recognizing, evaluating, and immediately caring for, and aiding in the prevention of, athletic injuries ("Collegescope"). They help to rehabilitate and recondition athletic injuries and are an essential component in the professional development of athletes, such as preparing athletes for practice or competition, including taping, bandaging, and bracing ("Collegescope"). Since ATC's are respected members of the allied health community, many work in clinical, industrial, and hospital settings (Lockard 3). ATCs work closely with other members of the allied health team including physicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, massage therapists,

chiropractors, and nutritionists. To be successful in this field, good social and communication skills, as well as a strong desire to help people, are essential. Organizational and time-management skills are also very important (*National Athletic Trainers Association*). The schedules of an ATC can vary depending on the work environment. Those that are employed in non-sport settings usually have a set schedule with nights and weekends off ("US Department of Labor"). Those that work in a sports related environment can have a more varied schedule. They need to be present for team practices and games, which can be at any time on any day, and schedules can change at a moment's notice. Due to these variances, sports related ATCs may have to work 6 or 7 days per week and possible late hours ("US Department of Labor").

According to Kelley Meiers, an ATC at 24-Hour Fitness, on a typical day, an athletic trainer may train or rehabilitate existing clients for several hours, then spend several hours attempting to recruit new clients. Some time is also spent researching new information and techniques to offer their clients to assist them in achieving their goals (Meiers). Career opportunities for ATCs are very good. The profession is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2014, "due to the demand for healthcare and employees to turn to on-site help to prevent injuries and provide immediate treatment for any injuries that do happen" ("US Department of Labor").

As shown, the **career overview** of a Certified Athletic Trainer is vast and varies quite a bit, which is no different from its **salary** opportunities.

Although most ATC's work full time and receive benefits, their **salaries** vary greatly depending on the setting in which the trainer works. The average annual earnings is \$36,075 but can get up to \$65,000. ATCs that work for professional teams may earn up to \$150,000 annually (*National Athletic Trainers Association*). "The licensure requirements and increased legislation has led to ATCs being accepted as qualified health providers by the American Medical

Association, as ATCs usually work under the direction of physicians and provide immediate care for injuries” (Lockard). There are several other occupations that are related to Certified Athletic Trainers. They are recreational therapists, occupational therapists, respiratory therapists, physician assistants, and registered nurses. Some of the other perks of the job include working with professional and other well-known athletes, and traveling (“US Department of Labor”). With these perks and other opportunities, it seems as though the real “pay-off” for being a Certified Athletic Trainer may extend beyond one’s yearly salary, but none of that is possible without the proper education and training needed to enter into the profession.

In order to become a Certified Athletic Trainer, certain education and training requirements must be met. “The minimum qualifications for becoming an ATC are a Bachelor’s Degree, usually in Kinesiology or Physical Education, from an accredited college or university and successful passing of a comprehensive, three-part (written, written simulation, practical) examination given by the National Athletic Training Association (NATA) Board of Certification” (*National Athletic Trainers Association*). This is the entry-level credential and is required by most employers. Also required to maintain certification, an ATC must accumulate 75 hours of continuing education and recertification in CPR every three years (Lockard 4). To help students achieve their degree, the NATA Research and Education Foundation offers scholarships in three areas: Undergraduate, for college students in their junior year; Curriculum, for college students in their junior year of a curriculum program; and Postgraduate, for college students in their final year of undergraduate education or graduates of an undergraduate program (“US Department of Labor”). The education and training necessary to become a Certified Athletic Trainer is challenging but hands-on and relevant to the success of someone interested in joining the profession.

A career as a Certified Athletic Trainer is interesting to me because of its overall career overview, perk-attached salary, and highly-rated education and training. Being a Certified Athletic Trainer may not necessarily be a high-paying profession, but it will enable me to utilize my knowledge, skills, and training, coupled with my personality strengths, interests, values, and desire to help others, in reaching their athletic potential. After all, how could a sports fan deny the temptation of getting paid to watch some his favorite athletes from only a few feet away?

Works Cited

"Collegescope." CHOICES Assessment. 17 May 2007 <www.humanesources.com>.

Lockard, C Brett. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*. Athletic Trainers, 2005.

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